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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: women's role in equal participation in conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution and peace-building

Statement submitted by Anglican Consultative Council, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.

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The Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion is comprised of 75 million Christians from 164 countries reaching from England to Southern Africa, from Australia to the Southern Cone, from the United States to the Philippines. Many Anglicans, mostly in Africa and the Middle East, experience conflict affecting mainly Women, Children and the Aged.

A Theological Statement

As Christians we believe that all humanity is made in the image of God; as Anglicans we live in the creative tension of differing experiences and viewpoints; as Women we are called to respond to the brokenness of the world. **This is at the heart of our theology**.

We firmly believe the two areas of critical concern for this year are important ones and pray that this gathering can help give insight, direction and inspiration to those who daily face gender inequality and conflict.

The Role of Men and Boys in Gender Equality

We concur with the statement of the Beijing Platform for Action, Paragraph 41, which comments on the Critical Areas of Concern stating that, "the advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue."

The achievement of gender equality is a responsibility of the whole society and should fully engage women, girls, men and boys. At the root of our faith is a commitment to justice and peace in the world. Unequal power relations and gender stereotypes in education and socialization processes, in health and HIV/AIDS, violence and harassment pose serious challenges to the achievement of gender equality. We welcome the systematic evaluation of the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality at this 48th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women **and we fully support the Millennium Development Goals and their commitment to promote gender equality and empower women.** For example we applaud the efforts of our sisters in South Africa as they initiate talks within the church on gender equality.

We therefore call upon this commission to:
a). support the work of the partnership of government and the NGO community in the implementation of policies and programmes which will create gender harmony;
b). urge United Nations agencies to formulate programmes dealing with education and re-socialization of women and men for gender equity;
c). urge governments to apply gender budgetary analysis to overseas development aid, as recommended in the Financing for Development consensus;

d). advocate for those marginalized by gender injustice, and to work in a collaborative way in order to bring about changes in all institutions including faith communities and society; and,
e). encourage governments to promote a better understanding of issues around Gender Justice, recognizing that the achievement of gender equality is a responsibility of everyone and that national policies should fully engage women, girls, men and boys.

Women as Peacemakers and Conflict Reconcilers

We believe peace is possible on a global scale. However, it will take a new way of acting – for too long national leaders have led the human race into wars and violence in the name of justice, religion and revenge. In modern day warfare, civilians are 90 per cent of the casualties, and the vast majority of the casualties are women and children. We know that when human rights and gender equality reinforce each other, the level of violence decreases, not only within countries but globally as well.

The Beijing Conference in 1995 saw more than 180 governments commit themselves to the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision making to provide the necessary balance to strengthen democracy. On average on a global scale, only 14 per cent of the seats in national parliaments are held by women.[1] Almost ten years later women remain significantly under represented in national and local assemblies. We therefore encourage the Commission to pursue the adoption and implementation by all governments of the General Assembly Third Committee Resolution on Women and political participation (Agenda 110 adopted on November 6th 2003). Furthermore we also urge the Commission to ensure full implementation of the Security Council Resolution 1325.

Women of The Episcopal Church (the Anglican Communion in the United States) are particularly distressed that their country remains one of the very few which has not signed the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. The decision of the US government leadership not to ratify this UN convention underscores and helps to explain the paucity of women in decision-making roles. Because CEDAW has not been ratified in the US, women in that country have not been able to record whether or not gains have been made in the participation of women in conflict management and peace making. The Episcopal Church, through its legislative procedures, has expressed its commitment to CEDAW by continuing to urge ratification. The signing of the Convention would enhance the authority of the United States as an advocate for the seating of women at the peace table.

In conflict and post-conflict arenas women's exclusion is even more pronounced. Despite their experiences as casualties of war, women are rarely seen in

[1] Linda Wirth, "Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling"; International Labour Organization, Geneva

peacekeeping, peace-building, pre and post-conflict prevention, post-conflict resolution and reconstruction of their societies. We are confident this will change as around the world women rise up to proclaim that violence is never the answer, it only leads to more violence. Circles of women for peace are rising up across the globe and in that context, special attention should be given to identifying and working with local women who represent an influential voice for peace.

We hear from our Anglican sisters in other parts of the world of efforts underway in peace movements. From India comes "It is not enough to talk about peace, one must believe in it; it is not enough just to believe, one must work at it." The church women are committed to actions for peace-building in their country. In Eastern Zimbabwe such work takes the shape of sending women to Capetown for training at the Centre for Conflict Resolution. In Nigeria, dismantling the barriers of poverty and illiteracy are a priority. As in many countries, a male-oriented work culture and a hostile police force restrain women from taking their place in public office and in conflict resolution.

Conclusion:

We commit ourselves to the areas of concerns of this gathering - the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality and women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building.

We present our 2004 statement remembering with dismay that in 2003 the Commission on the Status of Women was unable to adopt a statement of Agreed Conclusions condemning the epidemic of violence against women. The delegation from the Anglican Communion, committed to respecting the dignity of every human being, decries the ways in which religion -- and custom and tradition – are used in the oppression of women. We are committed to listening to all points of view on the issues, understanding differing cultural and religious contexts but speaking and working particularly to identify when and where faith empowers and enhances women's lives. As Christians, Anglicans and Women, we are called to be peacemakers. We yearn for a new creation and the realization of God's promise to make all things new.

A Prayer for Gender Equality and Peace

We therefore wish to offer you the following in words paraphrasing a prayer written expressly for Beijing:

O God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, we pray for all who gather at the United Nations to uncover the role of women as peacemakers and participants in conflict resolution as they also address the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. Open our ears to the cries of a suffering world and to the healing melodies of peace. Amen